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From the Editor's Desk

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From The Editor's Desk



John P. Mullooly, M.D.

As we continue into the 1970's, a resurgence of interest and thought in medical-moral matters is becoming increasingly evident. Witness the recent establishment of the Kennedy Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Bioethics. Similar institutes are in the process of being established in other cities in the United States as well as in Paris and Lyons. One of the characteristics of these new institutes is the interdisciplinary approach through which the expertise of widely differing fields are brought to bear upon specific medical-moral problems.

Following this trend and in response to genuine problems and concerns of the Catholic community, the Catholic Hospital Association recently sponsored an unprecedented meeting in St. Louis on February 28-29, 1972. The purpose of this meeting was to assist the CHA in the formulation of proposals for studying complex medical-moral problems. The discussions included the possibility of establishing a Chair of Medical-Moral Studies. The Catholic Hospital Association is to be commended for the leadership they have displayed in "bringing together organizations within the Church's structure which have a manifest concern, interest and involvement in coming to grips with emerging medical-moral issues."

The organizations represented at this meeting included: The Catholic Theological Society of America, The Committee on Health Affairs, USCC, The National Association of Catholic Chaplains, the National Conference

of Catholic Bishops, The National Conference of Catholic Charities and The National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds. Representatives of NFCPG included John R. Cavanagh, M.D., Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Hospital Directives; John J. Brennan, M.D., Vice-President, and myself.

During the two day conference several proposals were introduced and discussed. My personal impressions were most favorable and encouraging. Around the conference table were gathered five bishops, two representative moral theologians, Catholic hospital administrators, Catholic chaplains, and physicians. The discussions were frank, cordial, vigorous and free of rancor. They were, indeed, examples of the "both-and contributions" and of "the variety of competences that go to make up the authentic teaching function in the Church" noted by Fr. Richard McCormick in his response to Dr. Paganelli on page 115 of this issue.

One lingering impression is the ever recurring question, "What do the doctors think?" It is crucial to these discussions that every physician communicate the medical-moral difficulties he experiences to his hospital administrator and to this committee. The lack of communication is great and it is the responsibility of each physician to help bridge this gap by expressing his moral dilemmas to responsible parties for assistance in resolving them.

Hopefully, we shall be able to see continuing advances toward viable solutions to the moral conflicts which Catholic physicians and hospitals face in these rapidly changing times.

John P. Mullooly, M.D.
Editor